



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

A philosophical reception of Homer

Citation for published version:

Mantzouranis, K 2016, A philosophical reception of Homer: Homeric courage in Aristotle's discussion of . in A Efstathiou & I Karamanou (eds), *Homeric Receptions Across Generic and Cultural Contexts*. Trends in Classics - Supplementary Volumes, vol. 37, De Gruyter, Berlin; New York, pp. 163-174.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110479799>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1515/9783110479799](https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110479799)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

Homeric Receptions Across Generic and Cultural Contexts

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



A philosophical reception of Homer: Homeric courage in Aristotle's discussion of ἀνδρεία.

Homer's representation of the heroic warriors of the *Iliad* bequeathed to the Greeks paradigmatic examples of martial valour as models for emulation and comparison: heroic figures such as Achilles, Hector, and Diomedes became a benchmark for subsequent discussions of courage and military prowess by poets, prose authors, and even philosophers. This paper explores how Homeric courage forms part of τὰ ἔνδοξα, that is, the reputable views that inform Aristotle's discussion of ἀνδρεία in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. I aim to show how Aristotle responds to the Homeric idea of courage and how he appropriates Homer to elucidate his own conception of genuine ἀνδρεία. I shall start by briefly summarizing Aristotle's position.

Aristotle's discussion of ἀνδρεία as a particular virtue of character (*EN* III.6-9) can be divided into two parts. In the main body of his exposition (*EN* 1115a6-1116a15, 1117a29-1117b22), Aristotle discusses what we may describe as ἀνδρεία proper or genuine ἀνδρεία, which he defines as a mean state with regard to fear and confidence (*EN* 1115a6-7). Aristotle places ἀνδρεία exclusively in the field of battle and thus narrows its scope in comparison to Plato.¹ For Aristotle, to display ἀνδρεία is to show the appropriate amount of fear and confidence and act accordingly when faced with the dangers and the fear-inspiring circumstances of the battlefield (*EN* 1115a28-35). The performance of one or more courageous actions, however, does not necessarily make one courageous. According to Aristotle, an action qualifies as a genuine manifestation of the relevant virtue only if the agent acts with the proper motivation. Courage, therefore, like other virtues of character, should be displayed 'for the sake of the noble', τοῦ καλοῦ ἕνεκα (*EN* 1115b11-13, 23-24; 1122b7).

In the remaining of his discussion (*EN* 1116a15-1117a28), Aristotle describes and examines certain states, which are commonly thought to conduce to courageous behaviour. The discussion of these states aims to show how ordinary conceptions of courage fail to qualify as proper ἀνδρεία in the Aristotelian sense. At the same time, by contrasting his own understanding of courage with popular views about it, Aristotle elucidates the true nature and

¹ By narrowing ἀνδρεία to its most paradigmatic manifestation, namely courage displayed in the battlefield, Aristotle responds to Plato's Socrates, who in the *Laches* (191d-e) extends the field of ἀνδρεία to include one's courageous stance in the face of various adversities, such as poverty, disease, or sea-danger. For Aristotle, the application of ἀνδρεῖος in such cases is a metaphorical use of the word (καθ' ὁμοιότητα, *EN* 1115a19) which extends ἀνδρεία beyond its proper field, cf. Stewart 1892, I, 283-4. On the different methodology that Plato and Aristotle employ in their treatment of the particular virtues, see Joachim 1951, 113-4.

scope of this virtue. It is this part of Aristotle's exposition that is most relevant for the examination of his reception and use of Homer.

Aristotle discusses five defective forms of courage. First, πολιτική ἀνδρεία, 'citizen courage', is the kind of courage displayed by citizen soldiers, who are motivated by a desire to win honour and avoid disgrace and the penalties imposed by the laws (*EN* 1116a17-1116b3). The second form is the kind of courage resulting from experience in certain conditions (ἐμπειρία), such as the courage displayed by mercenary soldiers (*EN* 1116b3-23). Third comes the courage that results from spirit or passion, θυμός, which resembles the ferocity of wild beasts (*EN* 1116b23-1117a9). Courage can also be displayed, fourth, by hopeful people (εὐέλπιδες), who feel confident because of past successes (*EN* 1117a9-22). Finally, one can display courage as a result of ignorance of the impending danger (*EN* 1117a22-28).

It has long been observed by Aristotle scholars that the classification of the defective forms of courage has its roots in Plato.² The role of technical expertise or skill (τέχνη) in the display of courage and the connection between courage and the spirited part of the human soul (τὸ θυμοειδές) are recurrent ideas in the discussions of ἀνδρεία in the Platonic dialogues.³ Even the term πολιτική ἀνδρεία that Aristotle uses (*EN* 1116a17) seems to have been borrowed from Plato.⁴

These Platonic resonances, however, are only part of the picture of Aristotle's sources. In his discussion of the defective forms of courage, Aristotle explicitly establishes Homer as a source for two of these forms, namely πολιτική ἀνδρεία and the ἀνδρεία of θυμός. In each case, Aristotle develops his argument in two steps. He first describes the nature of the defective form of courage in question, and then furnishes his discussion with citations of, and/or allusions to, Homer. Aristotle's use of Homer in this part of the discussion is a purposeful act of reception with a twofold aim: first, to illustrate by means of concrete examples the form of courage described; second, to reinforce his argument, by adducing the

² Grant 1885, II, 37.

³ Experience in a certain skill and courage: *La.* 192d-193e, *Prt.* 349e-351b; θυμός and courage: *R.* 410d-412a.

⁴ Grant 1885, II, 37; Joachim 1951, 120. At *R.* 430b-c, πολιτική ἀνδρεία is defined as the 'power to preserve through everything the correct and law-inculcated belief about what is to be feared and what isn't' (transl. Grube, rev. by Reeve). Plato uses the term πολιτική ἀνδρεία to distinguish the courage of the civilized man from the impetus of animals or slaves, who may *appear* to act courageously when driven by their natural instincts but in truth they are not, since their actions are not the result of education inculcated by law. The idea that true courage should be cultural, not natural, and a result of rational choice is formulated already in fifth century political discourse. Athenian democratic ideology, in its attempt for self-definition, presented Athenian courage as a result of free choice and rational thought in contrast to Spartan courage which was a result of constant hardship, enforced discipline, and external pressure, see Bassi 2003, 47-8; Balot 2004.

authority of the poet.⁵ This use of Homer to elucidate and strengthen a philosophical argument reveals something about the context of reception and Aristotle's attitude towards the source text itself. On the one hand, for an example to achieve its purpose it must be immediately recognizable by those to whom it is addressed. The use of Homeric examples, therefore, suggests that Aristotle's audience was (or should be) able to identify these examples and understand how they can help illustrate the point just made. On the other hand, the very fact that Aristotle adduces Homer to reinforce his argument suggests that in his view the two defective forms of courage in question are evidenced already in the epics. In other words, in Aristotle's mind Homer has already grasped an essential truth about the nature of courage.

Let us then describe the two defective forms of courage as 'Homeric' and assess their status *vis-à-vis* Aristotle's genuine ἀνδρεία. This discussion will show how Aristotle responds to the Homeric conception of courage and how he reworks the Homeric material in accordance with his philosophical outlook.

The courage of θυμός

In the epics θυμός is the seat of the affective life, it is therefore the physical basis that produces, among other things, the passion that prompts one to act courageously.⁶ Aristotle endorses this prevalent conception of θυμός and argues that θυμός is 'most eager' (ἰητικώτατον) to rush on dangers (*EN* 1116b26-27).⁷ To elucidate this form of courage Aristotle uses two sets of Homeric examples. One set comprises quotations of Homeric formulaic phrases which describe the rousing of a hero's spirit, usually as a result of the intervention of some god:

ἰητικώτατον γὰρ ὁ θυμός πρὸς τοὺς κινδύνους, ὅθεν καὶ Ὅμηρος (a) "σθένος ἔμβαλε θυμῷ" καὶ (b) "μένος καὶ θυμὸν ἔγειρε" καὶ (c) "δριμὺ δ' ἀνὰ ῥίνας

⁵ For the Greek practice of citing poetry in general and Homer in particular to illustrate or reinforce a point of view, see Halliwell 2000, 95-99.

⁶ *Il.* 3.8-9, 5.792, 15.561-4, 19.164-6; *Od.* 1.320-2. On Homeric θυμός, see Redfield 1994, 173-4; Hobbs 2000, 8.

⁷ Stewart (1892, I, 296) points to *Prt.* 349e, where Protagoras says of courageous men that they are confident and ready for action (ἵτας) in circumstances in which most men would be fearful. As has already been stressed, the Homeric idea that θυμός contributes to courage is discussed and elaborated in Plato's *Republic*. Although Plato's conception of θυμός is not identical to the Homeric one, Plato endorses the Homeric insight about the connection between θυμός and martial valour and links closely the spirited part of human soul (τὸ θυμοειδές) to the virtue of courage. For an extensive discussion of the Platonic conception of ἀνδρεία and its relation to θυμός or τὸ θυμοειδές, see Hobbs 2000. For a discussion of ἡνογία ('manliness'), the Homeric precursor of ἀνδρεία, see Graziosi & Haubold 2003.

μένος” καὶ (d) “ἔξεσεν αἷμα·” πάντα γὰρ τὰ τοιαῦτα ἔοικε σημαίνειν τὴν τοῦ θυμοῦ ἔγερσιν καὶ ὀρμήν.⁸

(EN 1116b26-30)

For spirit is something which especially spurs people on to face dangers; hence we have in Homer ‘he cast strength into his spirit’ and ‘he stirred up rage and spirit’ and ‘fierce rage breathed through his nostrils’ and ‘his blood boiled’. All such expressions seem to stand for impetus and the rousing of spirit.⁹

The second set of examples builds on the familiar comparison of courageous men with wild beasts.¹⁰ Here Aristotle does not cite but rather alludes to Homeric lines, and in particular to Homeric similes, where a warrior’s courageous behaviour is compared to the sturdy boldness of some animal in a situation of danger. Aristotle comments on the bold behaviour of animals:

οὐ δὴ ἐστὶν ἀνδρεία διὰ τὸ ὑπ’ ἀλγηδόνης καὶ θυμοῦ ἐξελαυνόμενα πρὸς τὸν κίνδυνον ὀρμᾶν, οὐθὲν τῶν δεινῶν προορῶντα, ἐπεὶ οὕτω γε καὶ οἱ ὄνοι ἀνδρεῖοι εἶεν πεινῶντες· τυπτόμενοι γὰρ οὐκ ἀφίστανται τῆς νομῆς·

(EN 1116b33-1117a1)

Now rushing into danger because one is driven on by pain and spirit without any sense in advance of the frightening things one has to face is not courage, because on that score even donkeys would be courageous when hungry, since they don’t stop grazing even when they are beaten.

Aristotle’s image is an allusion to the famous Homeric simile where Telamonian Ajax, in his slow and unwilling retreat in the face of a Trojan assault, is compared to an ass who does not stop feeding itself, although it is being incessantly beaten by children (*Il.* 11.558-65).¹¹ From the very beginning of the discussion of ἀνδρεία of θυμός Aristotle compares this form of courage to the fury and ferocious spirit of animals:

καὶ τὸν θυμὸν δ’ ἐπὶ τὴν ἀνδρείαν φέρουσιν· ἀνδρεῖοι γὰρ εἶναι δοκοῦσι καὶ οἱ διὰ θυμὸν ὥσπερ τὰ θηρία ἐπὶ τοὺς τρώσαντας φερόμενα, ὅτι καὶ οἱ ἀνδρεῖοι θυμοειδεῖς·

(EN 1116b24-26)

People also bring spirit under the heading of courage. Those who from spirit rush like wild beasts against those who have injured them also seem courageous, since for their part courageous people are spirited.

The image of wounded beasts attacking their pursuers, to which Aristotle compares those driven by their spirit into acting courageously, is less specific than the aforementioned

⁸ Aristotle quotes from memory, and as a result inaccurately, from (a) *Il.* 11.11-12 (μέγα σθένος ἔμβαλ’ ἐκάστω καρδίῃ) and 16.528-9 (μένος δέ οἱ ἔμβαλε θυμῷ), (b) *Il.* 15.594-5 (ἔγειρε μένος μέγα, θέλγε δὲ θυμὸν), (c) *Od.* 24.318-9 (τοῦ δ’ ὠρίνετο θυμός, ἀνὰ ῥίνας δέ οἱ ἦδη / δριμύ μένος...), (d) the expression ἔξεσεν αἷμα does not occur in Homer; cf. Stewart 1892, I, 297; Burnet 1900, 148, 150; Irwin 1999, 213.

⁹ All the translations of the *EN* are taken from Taylor 2006 with minor alterations.

¹⁰ Cf. Pl. *La.* 196e; *R.* 430b8.

¹¹ Cf. Stewart 1892, I, 297; Burnet 1900, 150; Irwin 1999, 213.

example of the ass. Nonetheless, given the recurrence of the references to Homer in this part of the *EN*, I argue that we can read this image as another allusion to a Homeric simile. When the Trojan Agenor decides to hold his ground and face the raging Achilles, his bold determination is compared to that of a leopard, which though wounded does not give up its fight against those who attack it:

ἤϋτε πάρδαλις εἴσι βαθείης ἐκ ξυλόχοιο
 ἀνδρὸς θηρητήρος ἐναντίον, οὐδέ τι θυμῷ
 ταρβεῖ οὐδὲ φοβεῖται, ἐπεὶ κεν ὕλαγμόν ἀκούσῃ·
 εἰ περ γὰρ φθάμενός μιν ἢ οὐτάσῃ ἢ ἐβάλῃσιν,
 ἀλλὰ τε καὶ περὶ δουρὶ πεπαρμένη οὐκ ἀπολήγει
 ἀλκῆς, πρὶν γ' ἢ ἐξυμβλήμεναι ἢ ἐδαμῆναι·
 ὥς Ἀντήνορος υἱὸς ἄγαυοῦ δῖος Ἀγένωρ
 οὐκ ἔθελεν φεύγειν, πρὶν πειρήσασαί τ' Ἀχιλλῆος.
 (*Il.* 21.573-80)

But as a leopard emerges out of her timbered cover
 to face the man who is hunting her and takes no terror
 in her heart nor thought of flight when she hears them baying against her;
 and even though one be too quick for her with spear thrust or spear thrown
 stuck with the shaft though she be she will not give up her fighting
 fury, till she has closed with one of them or is overthrown;
 so the son of proud Antenor, brilliant Agenor,
 was unwilling to run away until he had tested Achilleus (transl. Lattimore).¹²

This form of courage can be understood as a sudden emotional impulse that emerges as a reaction to a certain stimulus and urges one onto unreflective engagement with some danger. According to Aristotle, it is the most natural type of ἀνδρεία (φυσικωτάτη, *EN* 1117a4): it is an irrational, purely physical type of courage, which owes more to natural instincts than to cultural norms or experience. People who display this type of courage, like wild beasts, act because of pain (διὰ λύπην, *EN* 1116b32) and from their passion (διὰ πάθος, *EN* 1117a8-9), without any appreciation of the danger they face. By contrasting the Homeric ἀνδρεία of θυμός to genuine ἀνδρεία, Aristotle does not aim to question the role of θυμός in courage altogether. In Aristotle's view, the spirited element of human nature does contribute to the display of courage (συνεργεῖ, *EN* 1116b31), but its role in promoting courageous behaviour must be subsidiary, not primary. This is precisely why wild beasts and

¹² Note the reference to the θυμός of the leopard (574) as well as to its ἀλκή (578), which does not cease although the animal is hurt: at *EN* 1115b4-5, Aristotle concludes his response to the Socratic widening of ἀνδρεία by arguing that people show courage (ἀνδρίζονται) in circumstances which admit of ἀλκή or in which it is καλόν to die. In the *EE* discussion of courage, Aristotle compares the courage of θυμός to the fury of wild boars (ἄγριοι σύες), which display such behaviour when they are beside themselves (*EE* 1229a25-27). Again, the image of the distraught wild boar seems to be an allusion to a Homeric simile: at *Il.* 13.471-4, Idomeneus is compared to a wild boar (σῦς), whose back bristles and whose eyes are 'shining with fire' as it stands up to a group of men attacking it.

θυμός-driven humans fail to qualify as properly courageous: their spirit is the *primary* motivational force that incites their courageous behaviour. For Aristotle, θυμός provides only the natural basis required for courageous action and is inadequate by itself to produce genuine ἀνδρεία:

φυσικωτάτη δ' ἔοικεν ἢ διὰ τὸν θυμὸν εἶναι, καὶ προσλαβοῦσα προαίρεσιν καὶ τὸ οὗ ἔνεκα ἀνδρεία εἶναι. καὶ οἱ ἄνθρωποι δὴ ὀργιζόμενοι μὲν ἀλγοῦσι, τιμωρούμενοι δ' ἡδονταί· οἱ δὲ διὰ ταῦτα μαχόμενοι μάχιμοι μὲν, οὐκ ἀνδρεῖοι δέ· οὐ γὰρ διὰ τὸ καλὸν οὐδ' ὥς ὁ λόγος, ἀλλὰ διὰ πάθος.
(EN 1117a4-9)

Now courage prompted by spirit seems to be something purely natural, but it is when in addition it includes choice and the goal that it is courage. And people feel distress when they are roused to anger, and pleasure when they retaliate; people who fight for these reasons are combative, but not courageous; for they do not do it for the sake of the noble or as reason prescribes, but from feeling.

The courage of spirit requires two additional elements to become genuine ἀνδρεία: deliberate choice (προαίρεσις) and proper motivation or direction towards the proper goal (τὸ οὗ ἔνεκα). Courageous actions do not consist in rushing foolhardily into every danger. They must be rationally chosen and dictated by reason (λόγος), after calculating the nature of the impending danger, the alternative courses of action open to one, and what one puts at stake by risking one's life in battle. Furthermore, genuine ἀνδρεία requires proper motivation on the part of the agent. In Aristotle's theory of virtue, performing virtuous actions is not enough for making one truly virtuous; one must also act for a certain *reason*. Courageous behaviour motivated by pain or passion does not count as genuine ἀνδρεία. The truly courageous man is expected to act 'for the sake of the noble' (διὰ τὸ καλὸν or τοῦ καλοῦ ἔνεκα).¹³

πολιτική ἀνδρεία, 'citizen courage'

Aristotle distinguishes between two forms of πολιτική ἀνδρεία, one of which ranks higher than the other. The lower form of πολιτική ἀνδρεία is a result of compulsion and fear. It is displayed by soldiers who maintain their posts and fight because their commanders use coercive means, such as punishments and beatings, to enforce their obedience. Again, Aristotle chooses a Homeric example to elucidate this form of courage: he cites Agamemnon's words to his troops, by means of which Agamemnon threatens with death

¹³ On the two requirements, see Joachim 1951, 121; Deslauriers 2003, 189-90.

anyone who stays by the ships and avoids fighting (*EN* 1116a29-35).¹⁴ In its higher form, πολιτική ἀνδρεία is motivated by a sense of shame towards the opinion of others (δι' αἰδῶ, *EN* 1116a28). This latter form of πολιτική ἀνδρεία ranks higher than the former, for in Aristotle's view shame is superior to fear as an incentive to action. Fear is what the many (οἱ πολλοί) respond to: such people do the right thing only to avoid the pain of punishment. On the other hand, responsiveness to shame is a mark of better upbringing and of having already acquired a sense of what is noble and truly pleasant (*EN* 1179b10-16). Acting out of shame and the desire to avoid doing what is considered disgraceful suggests that one pays due respect to the opinion of others and has been properly habituated in acting in accordance with the values of the community. In other words, whereas fear implies blind conformity to the precepts of others with a view to avoiding external sanctions, shame requires the internalization by the agent of the values of the community: one who acts out of shame has made the values of the community one's own.¹⁵

This higher form of 'citizen courage', Aristotle says, is mostly displayed in societies where the complementary concepts of honour and shame weigh heavily and are regarded as major motivational factors. Aristotle finds that the society which best fits this description is the society depicted in the epics, so he adduces Homer once again to reinforce his argument and elucidate it by means of two concrete examples:

δοκοῦσι γὰρ ὑπομένειν τοὺς κινδύνους οἱ πολῖται διὰ τὰ ἐκ τῶν νόμων
ἐπιτίμια καὶ τὰ ὀνειδή καὶ διὰ τὰς τιμάς· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἀνδρείοτατοι δοκοῦσιν
εἶναι παρ' οἷς οἱ δειλοὶ ἄτιμοι καὶ οἱ ἀνδρεῖοι ἔντιμοι. τοιούτους δὲ καὶ
Ὅμηρος ποιεῖ, οἷον τὸν Διομήδην καὶ τὸν Ἑκτορα·
Πουλυδάμας μοι πρῶτος ἐλεγχείην ἀναθήσει·
καὶ [Διομήδης]
Ἑκτωρ γὰρ ποτε φήσκει ἐνὶ Τρώεσσ' ἀγορεύων
"Τυδείδης ὑπ' ἐμείο."

(*EN* 1116a18-26)

Citizens seem to face dangers because of the penalties of the law and public disgrace and honour, and therefore the most courageous seem to be those among whom the cowardly are disgraced and the courageous honoured. Homer depicts people of that kind, such as Diomedes and Hector, who say

Polydamas will be the first to heap reproach on me
and

Hector will say when he speaks to the Trojans
'The son of Tydeus has fled from me.'

¹⁴ The reference is to *Il.* 2.391-3, but Aristotle wrongly attributes these words to Hector instead of Agamemnon, cf. Stewart 1892, I, 293.

¹⁵ Cf. Williams 1993, 78-85 and Cairns 1993, 16-17, 43-44, 80-81, who respond to Dodds' (1951, 17-8) famous description of Homeric society as a 'shame-culture'.

Aristotle's knowledge of Homer becomes evident in this context, since the examples he chooses to use from the *Iliad* are particularly successful in showing how one's sense of shame can generate courageous behaviour. The first is derived from Hector's famous monologue before his final battle with Achilles. Hector anticipates the heavy criticism he will incur from Polydamas for not heeding his prudent advice and decides to remain outside the walls of Troy and confront the raging Achilles (*Il.* 22.99-110). In the second example, Diomedes, forced by Zeus' thunderbolt to abandon his advance, complains that should he hearken to Nestor's advice and retreat before Hector, Hector's boast would make him suffer an insufferable loss of face (*Il.* 8.146-50).

Having clearly illustrated the nature of πολιτικὴ ἀνδρεία, Aristotle then goes on to describe its workings and explain how it relates to genuine ἀνδρεία:

ὡμοίωται δ' αὕτη μάλιστα τῇ πρότερον εἰρημένη,¹⁶ ὅτι δι' ἀρετὴν γίνεται δι' αἰδῶ γὰρ καὶ διὰ καλοῦ ὄρεξιν (τιμῆς γάρ) καὶ φυγὴν ὀνειδους, αἰσχροῦ ὄντος.

This sort most closely resembles the one previously discussed [i.e. genuine courage], because it comes about from virtue, i.e. from shame and the desire for a noble thing (namely honour) and the avoidance of disgrace, as something shameful.

Aristotle's construal of πολιτικὴ ἀνδρεία fits perfectly in the Homeric framework and captures the epic representation of military prowess, its motivation, and its scope. The martial valour of a Homeric hero is the most evident manifestation of his ἀρετή,¹⁷ which is motivated by his sense of αἰδώς towards his *milieu*: in battle circumstances, the single cry for αἰδώς is the most common way to prompt slacking or discouraged men back into action.¹⁸ By displaying his prowess in battle, the Homeric hero seeks to secure for himself τιμή, which entails both respect and a good name among his peers and the more concrete material possessions and privileges that accompany his superior status and social position.¹⁹ Failure or unwillingness to display courage besmirches one's τιμή and results in the disgraceful condition of being open to the reproach of others.²⁰ Thus, the higher form of Aristotle's 'citizen courage' corresponds to the most typical form of Homeric courage, namely courage motivated by a sense of shame in the face of public criticism.

This form of courage, Aristotle says, is most akin, but not tantamount, to genuine ἀνδρεία. This is due to the status of honour (τιμή), the complementary concept of shame, as

¹⁶ Cf. *EN* 1116a17: μάλιστα ἔοικεν.

¹⁷ *Il.* 8.535-6, 11.90-1, 11.407-10, 11.762-4, 13.276-86, 22.268-9.

¹⁸ *Il.* 5.529-32, 5.787, 8.228.

¹⁹ *Il.* 12.310-21, 8.161-6, 9.601-5.

²⁰ *Il.* 2.119-22, 2.295-8, 4.242-6, 11.313-5.

a motive for action. Aristotle classifies honour as ‘the greatest of the external goods’ (*EN* 1123b20-21) but rejects the view of those who consider it the supreme good of human life (*EN* 1095b22-26). Honour is indeed a noble motive, since it is not distributed haphazardly but is bestowed only upon those who promote, or are in a position to promote, the community’s well-being (*Rh.* 1361a28-30). In this light, displaying courage with a view to honour is finer than being courageous for the sake of acquiring less admirable goods, such as power or wealth. In Aristotle’s theory of virtue, however, honour does not constitute the proper motivation for a truly virtuous action. If one fights bravely being primarily motivated by the honour that customarily ensues from such actions, then one is motivated by external rewards rather than by the nature of the action itself. In Aristotelian terms, this amounts to performing an action for an *external* end, which violates one of the requirements of virtuous actions, namely that the action must be chosen *for its own sake* (προαιρούμενος δι’ αὐτά, *EN* 1105a32). Aristotle’s principle that the courageous man should act ‘for the sake of the noble’ (τοῦ καλοῦ ἕνεκα, *EN* 1115b12-13, 23-24) redirects the order of priority and focuses on the intrinsic value of the action rather than on the external rewards that accompany it.²¹

‘For the sake of the noble’

Performing an action τοῦ καλοῦ ἕνεκα implies that the agent chooses to act in the way he does because he fully appreciates, and is motivated by, the intrinsic beauty or goodness of his action.²² The man of citizen courage (in its higher form) and the man of genuine ἀνδρεία may indeed prove equally courageous in action. In addition, by displaying courage they act in a way that their social *milieu*, and they themselves, regard as καλόν. The man of genuine ἀνδρεία, however, rationally grasps that what renders courageous actions καλόν is their intrinsic goodness not the praise or honour that customarily ensues from them. Unlike the man of citizen courage who acts with a view to honour, the man of genuine ἀνδρεία is motivated by the intrinsic value of his action. What prompts him is the understanding that such an action is worth doing in itself, just because it is the kind of action it is, regardless of

²¹ There is no tension or incompatibility between doing an action ‘for the sake of the noble’ and doing it ‘for its own sake’: a courageous action is seen as noble in virtue of its being courageous; see Rogers 1994, 311; Richardson Lear 2004, 124-5; Taylor 2006, 86-7.

²² This is only one of the attributes that Aristotle’s conception of τὸ καλόν entails. I focus on this aspect of τὸ καλόν because it is the one most relevant to the distinction that Aristotle draws between ‘citizen courage’ and genuine courage. Actions described as καλόν are also rationally chosen, demanding, praiseworthy, fitting or appropriate to the circumstances in which they are performed, and (more often than not) other-regarding. Actions of genuine ἀνδρεία display, of course, all these characteristics. For Aristotle’s conception of τὸ καλόν, see Owens 1981; Broadie 1991, 92-4; Rogers 1993; Nisters 2000, 52-67; Irwin 2010. For a detailed discussion of the motivation of Aristotelian ἀνδρεία, see Rogers 1994.

any favourable consequences or rewards.²³ When the cause justifies the risk, the man of genuine courage risks his life in battle even if no honour is to be gained by his action, or even if his decision to act courageously is shared by no one but himself.

Aristotle's analysis, therefore, shows that πολιτικὴ ἀνδρεία, the most typical form of Homeric courage, ranks lower than genuine ἀνδρεία. Nonetheless, Aristotle does not overlook or underrate the value of the Homeric conception of courage. Aristotle often reiterates that becoming truly virtuous, and so acting 'for the sake of the noble', is not an easy task: few people are endowed with the moral and mental capacities that would enable them to achieve this ideal. But the city still needs protection and ordinary men to defend it and risk their lives for its sake. Therein lies the value of honour and shame as motivational factors: being more applicable to ordinary people than the rational appreciation of τὸ καλόν, the desire for honour and a sense of shame in the face of public criticism ensure that the city will not be left without protection. As Aristotle observes, while professional soldiers are the first to flee, citizen soldiers hold their ground and sacrifice themselves because they prefer death to the disgrace of a shameful flight (*EN* 1116b17-20). 'Citizen courage' preserves the city even when the citizens are not so philosophically oriented as to fulfil the requirements of τὸ καλόν. This pragmatic form of courage, though defective in philosophical terms, is according to Aristotle the form that most closely resembles genuine ἀνδρεία.

Conclusion

Homer occupies a prominent place in the part of Aristotle's discussion where genuine ἀνδρεία is contrasted to five commonly held, but defective, conceptions of courage. Aristotle finds that two of these endoxic conceptions, πολιτικὴ ἀνδρεία and the courage of θυμός, are formulated already in the epics. He therefore appropriates Homer to elucidate and reinforce his argument, by citing and alluding to Homeric examples which provide concrete evidence of the forms of courage in question. Aristotle singles out these two 'Homeric' forms as being closer to genuine ἀνδρεία than the rest and explains why they are defective and how they can be transformed into genuine ἀνδρεία. Like Homer and Plato, Aristotle sees a connection between θυμός and courage, and argues that in order to become true courage the ἀνδρεία of θυμός requires deliberation (προαίρεσις) and proper motivation. Courageous actions must be the product of rational choice and must be performed with a view to a certain goal.

²³ Cf. Cairns 1993, 420, 427n.254; Taylor 2006, 187.

Motivation is what distinguishes πολιτική ἀνδρεία from genuine ἀνδρεία as well. ‘Citizen courage’ aims at honour, which *is* a noble thing, but it does not aim at ‘the noble’, τὸ καλόν, *itself*.

Aristotle’s conception of genuine ἀνδρεία underlines the importance of proper motivation for virtuous action and therefore refines, develops, and deepens the Homeric representation of courage. Nevertheless, throughout his discussion Aristotle acknowledges the validity and value of the Homeric outlook. By ranking the courage of a Hector or a Diomedes as second-best next to his conception of genuine ἀνδρεία, Aristotle does justice to the authority of the poet and at the same time propounds his own view on what it means to be truly courageous by acting ‘for the sake of the noble’.

Bibliography

- Balot, R. (2004), „Courage in the Democratic Polis“, in: *Classical Quarterly* 54, 406-23.
- Bassi, K. (2003), „The Semantics of Manliness in Ancient Greece“, in: R. M. Rosen / I. Sluiter (eds.), *Andreia: Studies in Manliness and Courage in Classical Antiquity*, Leiden, 25-58.
- Broadie, S. (1991), *Ethics with Aristotle*, New York.
- Burnet, J. (1900), *The Ethics of Aristotle*, London.
- Cairns, D. L. (1993), *Aidōs: The Psychology and Ethics of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greek Literature*, Oxford.
- Cooper, J. M. (ed.) (1997), *Plato: Complete Works*, Indianapolis.
- Deslauriers, M. (2003), „Aristotle on *andreia*, Divine and Sub-Human Virtues“, in: R. M. Rosen / I. Sluiter (eds.), *Andreia: Studies in Manliness and Courage in Classical Antiquity*, Leiden, 187-211.
- Dodds, E. R. (1951), *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley.
- Grant, A. (1885), *The Ethics of Aristotle*, London.
- Graziosi, B. and J. Haubold (2003), „Homeric Masculinity: ΗΝΟΡΕΗ and ΑΓΗΝΟΡΕΗ“, in: *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 123, 60-76.
- Halliwel, S. (2000), „The Subjection of Muthos to Logos: Plato’s Citations of the Poets“, in: *Classical Quarterly* 50, 94-112.
- Hobbs, A. (2000), *Plato and the Hero: Courage, Manliness, and the Impersonal Good*, Cambridge.
- Irwin, T. H. (1999), *Nicomachean Ethics*, Indianapolis.

- _____ (2010), „The Sense and Reference of *Kalon* in Aristotle“, in: *Classical Philology* 105, 381-96.
- Joachim, H. H. (1951), *Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics: A Commentary*, Oxford.
- Nisters, T. (2000), *Aristotle on Courage*, Frankfurt am Main.
- Owens, J. (1981), „The *Καλόν* in the Aristotelian Ethics“, in: D. J. O’Meara (ed.), *Studies in Aristotle*, Washington, 261-77.
- Redfield, J. M. (1994), *Nature and Culture in the Iliad: The Tragedy of Hector*, Durham and London.
- Richardson Lear, G. (2004), *Happy Lives and the Highest Good: An Essay on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, Princeton.
- Rogers, K. (1993), „Aristotle’s Conception of *Tò Καλόν*“, in: *Ancient Philosophy* 13, 355-71.
- _____ (1994), „Aristotle on the Motive of Courage“, in: *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 32, 303-13.
- Stewart, J. A. (1892), *Notes on the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle*, Oxford.
- Taylor, C. C. W. (2006), *Nicomachean Ethics. Books II-IV*, Oxford.
- Williams, B. (1993), *Shame and Necessity*, Berkeley.